

CITY OF NEW HAVEN
TONI N. HARP, MAYOR



PREPARED COMMENT OF THE CITY OF NEW HAVEN

**RE: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
AUTHORITY IN NEW HAVEN & AN ACT ESTABLISHING A
CONNECTICUT MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

February 27, 2019

Senator Cassano, Representative McCarthy Vahey, members of the Committee, my name is Michael Piscitelli and I am the Deputy Economic Development Administrator for the City of New Haven. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the City concerning the two above referenced bills, both of which concern the delivery of economic development initiatives at the local level.

Concerning Bill 7209, the City remains concerned about the overall structure and reach of a new authority with limited representation by local officials. The bill structure is similar to prior legislation proposed under the Malloy Administration and includes broad language that would encompass Downtown districts as well as areas within a half-mile of a transit station. In transit-rich environments, such as the Hill to Downtown District of New Haven, this new authority would add a new layer of governance, complicating an already-lengthy development process. Conceivably, the memorandum of agreement process will lead to multiple (and potentially conflicting) arrangements between this new entity and the local municipality.

Further, the proposed legislation makes no mention of local development values, workforce initiatives, design review and other considerations which advance the overall and comprehensive development of the community. These values are extremely important to our community and, in implementing highly-successful neighborhood benefit programs, we maintain a clear focus on inclusive growth. I would call your attention to the City's 25% goal for resident construction participation, as well as the landmark agreement with Southern Connecticut State University to create a bioscience degree program, to give the Committee a sense for the type and significance of local development values.

In concept, the powers are similar to those currently enabled through municipal development plans. This time-tested approach is in place and assigns clear responsibilities to the state as well as to the local development commission and legislative body. Under this legislation, the state would be adding another quasi-public layer of governance, with no clear mandate to focus on key centers of growth and innovation.

With a governing body spread out geographically, this new authority will undoubtedly face pressure to deliver projects, rather than long-haul, district-based initiative and then the new authority will have to deal with intense competition from many communities for attention. **These are just some of our initial concerns and overall opposition to Raised Bill 7209.** Others relate to the looming inconsistencies among the various development programs, including City/Town Development Act, Municipal Development Programs and Enterprise Zones, all of which work through the local municipality in some fashion.

As an alternative, the City supports focus and attention on Proposed Bill 557, An Act Establishing a Regional Development Authority in New Haven. If made into law, this bill would advance major project delivery in greater New Haven with a governing body that is locally-controlled, more responsive to local development values and more intentional in place-based economic development around our significant growth centers.

It should be noted that New Haven is among the best opportunity areas for growth in Connecticut, as documented by economist John Traynor in a recent speech to the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce. "The (talent driven) industries and jobs of the future will demand greater levels of human capital," according to Traynor. "The key for Connecticut is to find ways to bring the innovations germinated at places like Yale to fruition and eventually to market...New Haven can be that engine."

To that end, New Haven has been at the forefront of transit-oriented development and innovation, with 1,500 new apartments placed in service over the past five years and 2,500 more in the pipeline over the next three to five years. 100 College Street, the RMS development and DISTRICTNHV are just a sample of the recent and highly-successful public-private partnerships in New Haven. Overall, there is over \$1.2 billion invested in the New Haven innovation economy, \$450+ million in research grants under contract and plans to dramatically grow the Long Wharf and Hill to Downtown Districts. **This is a positive trajectory of statewide significance and the City strongly encourages the Committee to work with us on a service delivery model in keeping with Raised Bill 557.**

Respectfully submitted,

CITY OF NEW HAVEN



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